

St. Mark's Messenger

December 2022

FATHER JOHN'S REFLECTIONS



And now we are in Advent. Where has the year gone? And how will we deal with our busy lives in December? Consider some things on the schedule for our parish.

Father John is hosting the bishop and the clergy of the Altoona Convocation on December 1 and the Lewistown ministerium on December 7. The Ice Festival is on December 2. Father Ted will be ordained on December 10, and I am one of his presenters. Breaking Bread Together will be on December 27, two days after Christmas.

And did I mention the greening of the church on December 18 and our Christmas eve service on December 24? Oops, I forgot about Toys for Tots (December 10-17). When will I have time to ponder the mystery of the Word made Flesh?

As you listen to the lessons in December, keep track of all the people in the stories who also were busy, some waiting in hope and others in dread (Herod comes to mind). Watch how people lived as they were waiting; please note that they were not passive.

Think of the magi, who had been traveling for several months to find the newborn baby. Think of Mary and Joseph, who were awaiting the birth of a child promised by an angel and would make an 80-mile trip by donkey at the end of Mary's pregnancy. (Imagine that!)

Ready, set, go. The ticking clock is the heartbeat of God. Can you hear it?

And that is where we come in: preparing *our* hearts for the coming of Christ.

Advent is a time of preparation, not repentance. The most important gift we can give ourselves is to set aside time for prayer.

Slow down.

But when Christmas arrives, celebrate!!! Merry Christmas and peace to you.

Father John+

FESTIVAL OF ICE

This joyful event returns to St. Mark's on Friday, December 2, at 7PM. Come and enjoy the evening with our neighbors in the community.



THE GREENING OF THE CHURCH

Please help us decorate the church for Christmas after our service on December 18. Many hands will make the job go quickly. We will enjoy a light lunch after our work is done.

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Our Christmas Eve service will be on Saturday at 7PM. We will not have a service on Christmas Day.

We will celebrate the New Year on January 1 with a service of lessons and carols.

MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD, BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER, AND TOYS FOR TOTS

On November 22, we served 50 people (men, women and children, old and young alike) a delicious meal of ham balls (from Wilson's), Tracey's mac 'n' cheese, and desserts. In the past month, we have served 410 people (188 families, including 22 new individuals and 10 new families).

Our effort to feed the hungry reflects very well on our community and illustrates what Jesus says in Matthew 25:35-45. At Mother Hubbard's this year, we served ~2,500 people. At BBT we served about 600 more folks at our monthly meals. Four days a week, 52 weeks a year we serve them with no strings attached. This month we will gather and distribute several thousand toys through Toys for Tots. If people ask you why we do this, just say: Matthew 25.

Jesus was very specific: If you love me, feed my sheep. Take care of the neediest people, including strangers. Love everyone and be gracious to them.

If you have two coats, give one away to someone who has none. Quite a few parishioners have made gifts to help MHC or to the Homeless Shelter. Can you join them?

For Advent, I ask that you give all of your loose change to the Shelter. In any given month, they are housing nearly 20 men, women, and children. Friends, can you spare some change?



STEWARDSHIP FOR 2023: WE HAVE MORE THAN ENOUGH GENEROUS HOUSEHOLDS

Twenty-three households have turned in their pledges for 2023, and the vestry and I are grateful to everyone who pledged. We had three new pledges, and nine households were able to increase their pledge. Our theme was “More than Enough,” and your generosity ensures that we will not only have another balanced budget but can also continue our ministries as we prepare for our 200th anniversary. If you have not pledged, it is not too late.

Truly, God has blessed us with more than enough. We will continue to maintain our beautiful buildings and reach out in new ways to our neighbors.

ANNUAL MEETING

Following the new procedures for Annual Meetings in COVID times, we will hold our brief annual meeting on January 8 immediately after the service. After reviewing the budget approved by the vestry in November, we will elect our delegate to our Diocesan Convention. (We have no new vestry members to elect.) Each of our committees and areas of ministry will have a written report, and Father John will distribute them before the meeting. The meeting will last no longer than 15 minutes. Following the meeting we will have a light meal in the parish house.

PRAYER REQUESTS

We ask your prayers for Ralph Aitkin, Shirley Brown, Ralph Bitner, Bob Briar, Richard Flood, Joyce Hart, Ann Harwood-Nuss, Carol Mease, Steve Myers, Willa Silverman, Lynn Stricker, Patty Wagner, Henry Walk, Jackie Walk, Evelyn Wilson, and Bill Wilson.

Pray also for those serving in the **military** as well as **President Joe Biden** and **Governor Tom Wolf**.

Pray for the people of Ukraine in their fight for freedom. Many people are living this winter without electricity or water. Be generous in your support for them.

Please send cards to Joyce Hart (1001 Mountain Springs Lane, McClure, PA 17841). Her birthday is December 6.

ORDINATION OF THE REV. TED CHRISTOPHER ON DECEMBER 10

Ted would be delighted to see us at his ordination. If you have never participated in this kind of service, I strongly recommend that you participate. The liturgy and music will be wonderful.

Father Ted will serve Episcopal students at Penn State, reviving a tradition of campus ministry that is so important to the future of our church.

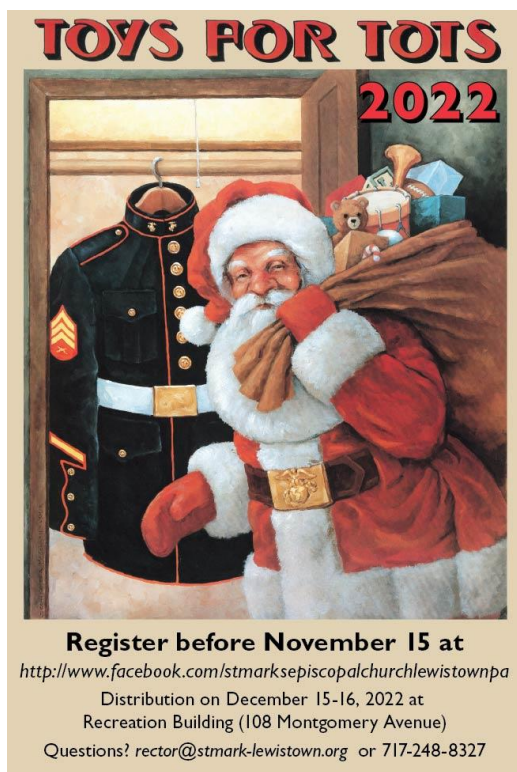
The vestry has given Ted a gift of \$250 to help him get started in his new role.

WHERE IS JOANNE YANG?

Joanne will be visiting her family in Taiwan for several weeks in December and early January. During the pandemic, it was not possible for her to travel there or for her family to visit her in the United States. She is really looking forward to spending the holidays with her family.

During her absence we will work with several different pianists from Penn State. Each of them will be excellent, and I know that we will give them a warm welcome.

TOYS FOR TOTS: WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!



To bring joy to several hundred families and nearly 500 children when we distribute toys during the week of December 10-17, we will need lots of help. Even Santa has lots of elves. We will be working this year in the Community Recreation Building (108 Montgomery Avenue), a beautiful facility that is fully accessible.

Our work has several parts. First, we need to set up the tables in the Rec Building and then move the toys left over from last year to the site. We'll arrange them on tables by the age of the child (toddlers to teenagers) so that it will be easy for the parent to pick the right gifts.

We will also receive toys from State College, but that date is not yet known. Finally, we'll distribute the gifts on December 15-16 and then clean up the facility on December 17.

We need you to help and to bring an able-bodied neighbor or friend. This should be an easy

"ask": will you help us brighten the lives of needy children? Please let Father John know if you can help!

PROPERTY UPDATE

With buildings more than 100 years old, we will always have areas of concern. In 2023 we need to replace our ancient gutters, which are sagging on the north side of the church, leaking on the north side of the church office building, and overrunning on the south side of the Parish Hall. Gutters are essential to maintaining the integrity of the foundation and

are therefore rated as the top priority.

We also need to repoint some areas of our stonework and will require a professional stone mason. Old stone buildings like our church should not be repointed with modern materials since the old stones need ‘flexible’ mortar to avoid cracking the stones.

We need to repaint the exterior. Past attempts have resulted in various colors. For our bicentenary, we will select a uniform color.

After studying all options for creating an accessible restroom, we are closer to identifying a relatively low-cost solution, which will involve remodeling our current bathroom.

Finally, we will work with Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard to create more space for storing canned goods on shelves. Our community is incredibly generous about donating goods, but we need to find ways to store them in an organized fashion.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

<p>Joe and Phyllis Sikorsky – 1st (43rd anniversary) Ralph Bitner—5th Dr. Ricardo Carter—6th Joyce Hart—6th Kathryn Grossman—6th Michael Woodring—11th Jesus of Nazareth—25th Mary Beth Pietropaolo—25th Tony Hatfield-Nicholson—28th</p>	<p>O GOD, OUR TIMES ARE IN YOUR HAND: LOOK WITH FAVOR, WE PRAY, ON YOUR SERVANT N. AS (S)HE BEGINS ANOTHER YEAR. GRANT THAT (S)HE MAY GROW IN WISDOM AND GRACE, AND STRENGTHEN OUR TRUST IN YOUR GOODNESS ; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.</p>
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PLEASE LET THE CHURCH OFFICE KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHRISTMAS LIST

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS



----- Keep names from previous year.

_____ Add new names/occasions (“in memory of” or “in honor of”) as listed below. (Use back of card, if necessary)

Requested by _____

Amount (for Flower Fund) \$ _____